

BOOK REVIEWS

COMMON DISEASES, THEIR NATURE, INCIDENCE AND CARE,

By John Fry (Pp. 413, Illustrated £9.95). Lancaster, MTP Press, 1979.

THE book begins by discussing the concept of health, welcome in a clinical medical textbook. Next it briefly discusses the organisation of medical care in the British National Health Service and the different probabilities of disease presenting at different levels within this system. Techniques of coping with potentially unlimited workload are mentioned and the impact of social pathology on health and disease is outlined.

The main body of the book consists of a discussion of the common diseases affecting all the major organ systems of the body. A similar plan is followed throughout. First the common disease for each system in turn are defined and their relative impact upon morbidity in general practice, day's lost from work, and mortality is shown. Then each of these conditions is discussed in more detail in terms of epidemiology, aetiology, clinical features and management, often followed by an assessment of the significance of that particular condition to general practice. Finally chapter 51 discusses common diseases which occur at various ages throughout the patient's lifetime.

That this is all done within the space of 402 pages, most bearing at least one diagram or table, shows that of necessity the style must be terse. Many readers will welcome this economy of words but it does lend itself to dogmatism. The author has strong views on many management topics which he presents as fact with very little reference to recent research. Many experienced general practitioners might feel that some management topics could be subject to debate.

This aside, much of the book is excellent. The parts on epidemiology and clinical features of specific diseases could hardly be bettered. The style of the book throughout is that of the medical model, and this contributes to its success until "psychiatry" is discussed. Though the author states that conditions under this heading comprise well in excess of 15% of general practice, he disposes of this topic within 13 pages. In contrast is the treatment of "respiratory diseases" which make up 30% of general practice and which are dealt with in 105 pages. It is curious that no mention of the quality of the doctor-patient relationship is made here. A discussion of the therapeutic importance of this is reserved for the management of asthma and migraine. In fairness, however, it must be said that this chapter shows the author to be an experienced and caring personal doctor with a firm grasp of the practical aspects of his subject.

In conclusion, this book would be of great interest and benefit to any practising general practitioner, and parts of it would be valuable to medical students, specialists in all disciplines and community physicians. It could be read from cover to cover with profit by general practice trainees and altogether it is a worthy addition to the growing medical literature on general practice.

R.L.M.

REVIEW OF GROSS ANATOMY. By Ben Pansky, Ph.D., M.D. Fourth Edition

(Pp. 524; figures and plates, £9.50). London; Bailliere Tindall, 1979.

THE author agrees with most teachers and students that the fundamentals of topographical anatomy are best learned by dissecting the cadaver where the structures can be seen and handled. However, the facts so learned are easily forgotten and require frequent revision. This book is well suited for the latter purpose. The presentation is convenient in that each double page has up to eight drawings on the right hand page with the appropriate text on the left. The 1,000 or more illustrations by the author, many of which have the arteries, veins, and nerves appropriately coloured are of a high standard of draughtsmanship. There

are six sections: head and neck, back, upper extremity, thorax, abdomen and pelvis, and lower extremity. I was particularly impressed with the photographs and drawings illustrating surface anatomy and the clarity of the radiography in each section. Short paragraphs on clinical considerations and special features are given for most of the regions.

The book concludes with appendices giving definition of terms, a classification of joints, a bibliography, a 13 page atlas of systematic anatomy, and an index.

This book is highly recommended as an excellent comprehensive review of topographical anatomy and will be especially useful for medical and ancillary undergraduates and post-graduates preparing for examinations.

T.J.H.

MOTHERING YOUR UNBORN BABY. By Smith, D. W. (Pp. X + 97; illustrated. £5.00). Eastbourne; Saunders. 1979.

THE intrauterine environment and how it affects the fetus is a topical medical subject and it is not surprising that a book has appeared to convey the latest news to unsuspecting mothers-to-be. The author, a Professor of Paediatrics, demonstrates graphically that the welfare of the baby begins at conception and brings home his message firmly to his readers. A brief outline of the physiology of conception and early fetal development is followed by a description of the more common problems of pregnancy and the process of labour. All of this vast area is covered in 28 pages and although presented in simple language the information is not always strictly accurate. Also the reader in this country should be aware of the differences between North American and British obstetric practice.

The short chapter on nutrition in pregnancy offers sensible advice but is spoiled by irrelevant reference to animal studies. Fetal damage that agents such as drugs, alcohol, cigarette smoking and infection may cause are well explained and illustrated. However, one cannot help feeling that the author rather over reacts in his advice. Having described vividly the characteristics of the fetal alcohol syndrome with case-notes from patients who were chronic alcoholics, he advises the expectant mother to avoid taking alcohol at all. If that is not enough to worry a mother he adds, for good measure, that common drugs such as valium and aspirin *might* be harmful if taken during pregnancy. The expectant father is not forgotten; he is advised never to have an x-ray without asking the doctor to shield his testes and to give up reproductive activity after 60 years of age because of the slightly increased incidence of genetic defects in infants born to fathers over this age. The book provides some useful information but the mother who seeks education in these matters might prefer a more detailed and balanced account. The mother seeking quick advice from this book on how best to behave during pregnancy is in for a nasty shock.

J.W.K.R.

BEAT HEART DISEASE. By Risteárd Mulcahy, M.D., F.R.C.P., F.R.C.P.I., (Pp. 126; Illustrated. £1.95). London: Martin Dunity. 1979.

BEAT Heart Disease is a book which can be read with pleasure and benefit by doctors and lay people alike. It uses simple but precise language and clear illustrations to explain the importance of a healthy heart in the maintenance of good health. Concise chapters deal with the factors which can cause coronary heart disease, and the conclusion is reached that the bulk of coronary heart disease is preventable.

The core of the book is the section on "Exercise — The Key to Health". This is the best exposition of the benefits of exercise which I have read. It is lavishly illustrated in colour and provides simple practical solutions to the physical and psychological problems which deter many people, especially city dwellers from taking adequate exercise. The author's personal experience and practice are often referred to and his own delight in exercise is so